



## **MINUTES**

### **COMMUNITY POLICE REVIEW COMMISSION TRAINING SESSION**

**City of Riverside  
January 24, 2001, 6 p.m.  
Mayor's Ceremonial Room**

**Present:** Commissioners Brewer, Egson, Gardner, Goldware, Howe, and Redsecker

**Absent:** Commissioners Garcia, Hendrick, and Huerta

Interim Vice-Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

Motion was made by Interim Vice-Chair Gardner to approve the minutes for the January 16<sup>th</sup> Training Session. Commissioners Brewer and Goldware seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

#### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS**

Executive Director Williams had no comments.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

#### **TRAINING – Panel Discussion**

The panel discussion was held in two parts: City officials from 6 – 7:30 p.m. and citizen representatives from 8 – 10 p.m. The theme of the discussion was “What must the Commission do to be successful.” Each panelist was to complete the thought “In order for the Community Police Review Commission to be successful, I believe it must...”

#### **FIRST PANEL**

After giving a brief explanation of how the discussion would proceed, Executive Director Williams introduced Councilwoman Joy Defenbaugh. Councilwoman Defenbaugh said that the Commission is important as a policy maker. She said that attendance is important for a quorum and a full discussion and interchange among the commissioners. She also stated that the Commission has to build trust within the community, the Police Department and among themselves. She said there is a lack of trust in public areas and the Commission has a responsibility to help build trust in public business. She ended by thanking the commissioners for volunteering to serve on the Commission.

Police Chief Russ Leach spoke next, saying that the Police Department is at a crossroads, in a learning process and that the Internal Affairs function is vital, but that he's aware that some systems need adjusting. He said that he hopes the Commission can validate and strengthen the credibility of Internal Affairs, insuring that thorough and professional investigations have been conducted.

Commissioner Howe asked if there were going to be personnel changes in Internal Affairs. Chief Leach said yes, that they were going to be rotating several lieutenants.

Commissioner Egson asked what the mood of the Police Department is regarding the Commission. Chief Leach stated that he'd heard nothing negative regarding the role of the Commission, but said that question could best be answered by Sgt. Jay Theuer.

Sgt. Jay Theuer, President of the Riverside Police Officers' Association (RPOA), spoke next. He said that the RPOA didn't believe the Commission was necessary, but that they wanted to cooperate.

Commissioner Brewer asked Sgt. Theuer if there were any concerns. Sgt. Theuer said that the current system is sufficient, that Internal Affairs is thorough and that suitable conclusions are reached with the appropriate discipline. He also said that RPOA is leery of civilians and are not sure the Commission can render fair conclusions. They feel this layer of oversight is unnecessary.

Commissioner Egson said she is concerned about how officers feels and wants to work together. Sgt. Theuer said that there is some reluctance on the part of some officers to have confidence in the Commission investigating personnel matters, that police officers also have rights. Chief Leach commented that personnel matters are now only discussed with the appropriate supervisors to protect the credibility and integrity of the officers.

Commissioner Howe said that from experience, there have been many injustices not addressed by the Administration or RPOA and asked how the RPOA is going to address officers who are causing problems. Sgt. Theuer said the Association will support Administration if corrective action is necessary. Commissioner Howe asked if the Association would offer legal support to the officers. Chief Leach and Sgt. Theuer both replied that the Association has to offer legal to support the officer(s) in question.

After his introduction by Executive Director Williams, Councilman Ameal Moore thanked the commissioners for agreeing to serve on the Commission. Councilman Moore said that while on the committee that led to the formation of the Commission, he'd learned that the people weren't comfortable with the Police Department investigating themselves. He stated that one of the main reasons for the CPRC was to restore trust and hold officers accountable for their actions. He said that the Commission is expected to be fair and objective and must communicate their findings to the complainant so that the complainant is comfortable that a fair conclusion was reached. He also stated that citizens want to feel that officers will respond to them and treat them with respect and that minority communities want to be policed, but treated courteously and respectfully. He noted that people are willing to forgive when treated with respect. Councilman Moore ended by saying that the Commission can help in making the Riverside Police Department a model department.

Commissioner Howe commented that officers often stop people, pull them over, without telling them why.

Executive Director Williams introduced Councilwoman Maureen Kane, chair of the committee established to form the Community Police Review Commission. Councilwoman Kane agreed with all that had been said by her colleagues, but added that there is more to the Commission than reviewing Internal Affairs investigations. She said that the councilmembers read the minutes of the Commission meetings so they can understand what took place. She also stated that the Commission is an advisory body regarding Police Department policy. The Commission must also track problem officers and that if a patter is seen, recommend that corrective action be taken. She said the Commission can function like an auditor on items such as equipment needs, policy, structure and funding for the Police Department and is the vehicle by which this is communicated to the community and the City Council. She stressed the importance of public outreach by the Commission and said that trust occurs when a community sees changes have been made.

She finished by stating that whatever system this Commission creates now is the role into which succeeding commissioners will be placed and said that the Commission has Council support.

Commissioner Howe stated that the Rules and Regulations will require community outreach by the commissioners. Councilwoman Kane suggested Mayor's Night Out, Neighborhood Watch and Safe Streets meetings as ways of getting out into the community and understanding neighborhoods and helping with "problem neighbors."

Commissioner Goldware said we have a current example of what can happen when there's a problem in a neighborhood that is not addressed (referring to the death of Det. Jacobs). Chief Leach thanked all who had attended Det. Jacobs funeral, saying that he is frequently asked about the Commission. He said that it is important that the Police Department and the Commission maintain separate identities. Commissioner Egson responded that it won't be easy since the Commission is seen as the fox guarding the hen-house. She said that the Commission's role isn't just about complaints, but has a broader role and that needs to be communicated to the citizens. Councilwoman Kane said she hopes the Police Department will see the Commission as it's greatest ally. Commissioner Gardner said that no one yet understands the Commission or knows its role and that it's up to the Commission to show that it's not a "rubber stamp" on anything for either side.

Commissioner Redsecker voiced his concern about a lack of video equipment on police vehicles, stating that it would be good for both the officers and citizens if cameras were in the police cars. He asked if it were a money issue and how would the Police Department want to be advised by the Commission of such issues. Councilwoman Kane said there are budgetary issues, but that a pilot program is in place with regard to video cameras in police vehicles. She said that the Commission could make such recommendations to the Executive Director who would pass it on to the City Manager. Chief Leach said the Police Department is looking for grants for video recorders or belt audio recorders. Councilwoman Kane said she's been on ride-alongs and sees the needs in technology and equipment. Sgt. Theuer commented that the RPOA "loves" video cameras as they provide the best evidence and they are very much in support of them. Commissioner Goldware said it relates to communication. The Commission is the result of enough people saying there was a need for accountability and the community has to say they want the things that are needed. He also said public employees are scrutinized by the public. Chief Leach agreed, saying that officers, whether off duty or on, are held to a higher standard and that officers must project a reverence for the law at all times.

Executive Director Williams stated that he has a plan of action to get the commissioners into the various neighborhoods throughout the city. He then introduced John Holmes, City Manager for the City of Riverside. Mr. Holmes said that Riverside has more in common with large cities of half a million or more than with smaller cities. He said that Riverside was doing well, but not well enough with policing. He stated that the Chief of Police is the main check-point, then the CPRC Executive Director, then the Commission, saying that he sees the Commission as having a strong role in assuring the quality of investigations.

Commissioner Egson stated that money is a problem and that officers feel less secure with less equipment.

## SECOND PANEL

Executive Director Williams introduced Chani Beeman, Co-Chair of Riverside Coalition for Public Accountability. Ms. Beeman said the Commission must create a process that is transparent to the community and that this will be the at heart of the Commission's credibility in investigating charges of injustice. She also stated that the Commission must give the community as much information as possible. She said the Commission must be accessible by the community leaders and residents, and ask questions and listen. She said that the Commission must be vibrant and that it must work with the Police Department to resolve deep problems.

Alfredo Figueroa, Latino Network, was introduced next. Mr. Figueroa began by saying that he was on the Mayor's and Council's panel to establish the Commission. He said it was satisfying to see the Commission and know that the community has a voice. He also said that the Commission is not just about complaints, but that it started because the community wants accountability, that it's not about going after the Police Department, but having a Police Department of which the community can be proud. He said that the people need to know that the Police Department and the Council work for the public. He stated the Commission must be open-minded and have a vision that Riverside will grow and include everyone. He said that in order for the Commission to be successful it must rebuild trust and improve policing in the community; be objective and fair to both citizens and police officers – help bridge the gap; city officials must allow the Executive Director to do his job independent of city officials and the Police Department; and be diverse by reflecting the community they represent. He closed by offering to help the Commission in whatever way he could.

Executive Director Williams commented that he'd had support from day 1 from both the City Council and the City Manager and that the Commission is his responsibility. He also said that by March or April, he wants the Commission to be pro-actively involved in the community. Commissioner Howe suggested churches as another means of community outreach.

David St. Pierre, Chairman of the Human Relations Commission (HRC), was the next speaker. Mr. St. Pierre spoke about LEPAC, a committee that was part of the HRC. When Police Department revised or made new policies, LEPAC would review the changes or additions. Mr. St. Pierre said that he expects the commissioners to read all the RPD's Policies & Procedures, noting specifically the use of force policy. He also reiterated the importance of community outreach saying that "they won't know you if you're not out there." He also said that the public needs to feel safe about filing complaints with the Commission, letting them know that the Commission works for the public and not the Police Department. He said that the Police Department needs training in handling hate crimes and that policies and procedures need to be developed to recognize and determine that an incident is a hate crime. Mr. St. Pierre ended by saying that the HRC meets the fourth Thursday of each month.

Commissioner Redsecker noted that hate crimes are considered a form of domestic terrorism. Commissioner Howe said that the Commission would have input regarding training. Executive Director Williams commented that all police departments are grappling with the hate crime issue and that one of the charges of the Commission is to look at Police Department policy. Mr. St. Pierre said that he is also the chairman for the West Inland Empire Coalition Against Hate. Ms. Beeman noted that there must be proper recording of crimes and that the community is getting less tolerant of improper reporting. Commissioner Redsecker said the FBI has a domestic terrorism task force and Executive Director Williams said he'd try to get some information on this for the Commission. Dr. Bob Gill said that cities are under pressure to under-report, but that honesty is needed in order to deal with community problems. Cities or communities

don't want to be known for hate crimes. Commissioner Egson stated that under-reporting is a political tool. Mr. St. Pierre said that hate crimes are more prevalent in schools.

Dr. Jerry Louder spoke next, saying that he learned early on that African-Americans were vulnerable. He said that people had tried in the past to get a review commission, but had given up. Had they managed to get a commission then, maybe the Tyisha Miller incident wouldn't have occurred. He said that the Commission needs to be a constant advocate for the people - the Police Department doesn't need a PR board. He said that all institutions have those who fail and that those are the ones about which to be concerned; the good need to be praised, but deal with the bad. He said that the Commission will lose credibility if it's just PR for the Police Department and that officers wrongly charged will thank the Commission because it's a friend of justice. He stated that the Commission is here because people need someone they can talk to and from whom they can get results. He further stated that people should be shown the same respect regardless of color or ethnicity and that the Commission is here because the people needed a group to speak for them.

The next speaker introduced was Dr. Bob Gill, Presiding Co-Chair for the Coalition for Common Ground. Dr. Gill said that there is a wide variety of diversity, and a wide variety of religious diversity in the community. Some of these groups, such as the disabled community, can be overlooked. He said that officers need to be trained to be sensitive to the needs and attitudes of these groups, especially youth, in order to break cycles.

Executive Director Williams next introduced Dr. Jesse Wilson, Pastor of the Kansas Avenue Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Dr. Wilson pointed out that some segments of the community have deeper issues than others and that it is important for the Commission to move toward credibility. He also agreed with Dr. Gill, saying that the youth today are disillusioned with the system because they don't see it working. He said that the Commission needs to be visible, to listen, not talk, but listen, then listen more. He said the Commission needs to demonstrate to the Police Department that it is concerned about justice; be just, but thorough.

Commissioner Egson thanked Dr. Wilson for his understanding, honesty and knowledge. She agreed with Dr. Gill that a focus must be placed on the youth so they can believe in the system again. She commented that credibility is an issue with young people at school and at church and that it is a challenge to save the youth today; they are the community of tomorrow. She said that honesty is important in the molding of youth. Mr. Figueroa added that young people are jaded. He said his students often ask him why he even bothers trying to change things in a system that doesn't work. He said that to start helping the youth they need to be included.

Mr. De Vonne Armstrong, community activist, was introduced by Executive Director Williams. He said the Commission must recognize that there's a 99% chance that it will fail. He also noted that no city officials had stayed to hear the citizens. He said that the Human Relations Commission had been formed so that city officials wouldn't have to tackle problems. He stated that he was glad to see that the Commission isn't just a "rubber stamp." He said that the first time there's a problem the Commission will see who's in control. He said to get information out and make sure all understand. Get the facts out, but don't bite off more than you can chew – do one thing at a time, but do it well. He ended by saying the problems need to be solved by the community.

Commissioner Egson commented that based on Mr. Armstrong's comment, there was only 1% of optimism. Mr. Figueroa said that a year ago, there was less than 1%, that city officials were put under the spotlight, but everything is progressing. Commissioner Howe stated that he was once against oversight,

but after the incidents of the last two years, he's definitely an advocate of police review. Mr. Armstrong said the problem isn't all RPD, but bigger than just the police. He said the Commission should get council minutes the same as councilmembers get Commission minutes and that other departments should also be reviewed, not just the Police Department. Mr. Figueroa noted that LEPAC had subpoena power. Ms. Beeman said that the efforts that led to LEPAC were a step in the right direction, but that after being tweaked and twisted, it faded away. She said the Commission has the power to determine whether it continues or fades away and that it is essential to establish credibility.

The Commission adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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PHOEBE SHERRON  
Administrative Clerk